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THE RELIGIOUS APPEAL FOR THE NEW WORLD

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Any attempt at forecasting the immediate duty of the church is welcome. The period into which we are entering will not be one of peace, but one of struggle, and the influence of the church must be actual if religion is to be anything more than a survival. It cannot be too often emphasized that the church cannot substitute any form of polite entertainment for a spiritual message.

The first effects of war are often quickening and elevating. The appeal is made to patriotism and to ideal principles of justice and liberty. This, with the uncertainty and mystery of life, the movement of great forces for great ends, awakens reverence, dependence, and faith. Religious feelings and motions seem strengthened. Never since Cromwell did so many English soldiers march with a sense of divine purpose. The Abbé Barrès, the French writer, has interpreted the soul of the best French soldier: "Do not pray that I may be spared suffering. Pray rather that I may be able to bear it." "Our sacrifices will be sweet, if there shall be more light for the souls of men; if truth shall come forth more radiant, better beloved." The brutal act of war may be a spiritual renewal and prophetic of a new day, because these lives are touched by a sacred enthusiasm, because they are drawn out by a cause which they identify with the welfare of country and humanity. They feel directed by a higher power than themselves; they feel their struggle connected with the higher life of the race. "But

there is no glory in war," a French captain writes; "the glory is in the soul of man."

But what are the religious results of the war? What truths shine out with new light? What powers have been trained that may contribute to religious progress? As yet there is no certain answer to these questions.

We have tried to get four men who have seen long and varied service with our army in France to give us the religious message of the war. A minister frankly writes that he has no new religious message to give, his only story is that of service. A well-known layman replies that if we wish a criticism of the churches, Mr. Fosdick's *The Churches and the Trenches* has done it better than he can. And as to the religious results of the war, he has not been able to come to any clear thought, and so has nothing to say. The answers are all the way from zero to the promise of a new heaven and a new earth.

The finer spirits will be purified. Many a careless, purposeless lad has strengthened into a man. Many a

light-hearted, pleasure-loving girl in her self-denying service has found the true joy of life. Many a youth can say with Mr. Rupert Brooke, the young English poet who lost his life at the Dardanelles:

They brought us, for our dearth,
Holiness, lacked so long, and Love and Pain.

.
And nobleness walks in our ways again;
And we have come into our heritage.

These young lives will not come back the same. If religion can make its true appeal to them, they will bring the reverence and ideality and loyalty of a great cause to its service. The church may find new leaders for its best work.

The rank and file have been kept from the most brutalizing effects of war by the wholesome preventives in camp and field. There has been the practical Christian ministry to the whole man, and no armies have ever come out of war with such a good record as the Allies, with such capacity and receptiveness for higher things. The common virtues of their life, friendship, courage, loyalty, have been the first steps of religion. There has been many a touch upon the common man of unseen powers, and however superstitious it may have been, a spiritual eye would see the thousands returning from war, "fields white unto the harvest."

Multitudes at home have thought of religion as never before. Through suffering they have come to a need of God. It has been faith or despair, faith or brutal indifference.

Lips have cried, "God be pitiful,"
That ne'er said, "God be praised."

The Christian church has been forced to a re-discovery of faith. The world's

debacle, the seeming failure of Christianity to supplant the law of the jungle with the law of "good-will," has led Christian men everywhere to serious thought. Christianity has been challenged. Is Christ the world's law and the world's hope, or only the mad enthusiast of Galilee?

The people have been swept by a great wave of emotion. The deeps of life have been broken up. Gifts of money and life have been poured out without ceasing. Unselfish ideals have met wide response. The impossible things have been easily reached. Strange groups of people have felt an unwonted kinship. The millions have beat as one heart in their devotion to a great cause. Here are religious assets of the highest value. How can they be used for a new era of spiritual power?

I think there are three great religious facts gradually emerging from all the experience of war—from its suffering and service and thinking: (1) Men want religious reality—the simple essential truths that fit all men, not a chosen and peculiar few; that fit the whole man and make a full life. (2) Men want a religion that actually binds men together, as the word indicates, brothers because one "Elder Brother" and one Father. They will have a church or not as it expresses and secures their religious oneness. (3) And they ask for a religion that "worketh by love," that makes all life sacred, that touches everything a man does, the spirit in every expression, personal and social, of human life.

The struggle in which the nations have been engaged is bound to have a far-reaching effect upon our religious

conceptions and our religious life. It has been a world-war, and nothing less than a world-conception of Christianity should come out of it.

In every sphere of life forces are at work that would make a new world. It is certain that the nations cannot go back to the conditions before the war. All are affected; some are radically changed. It must have religion if it is to be a better world.

I. What Is the Religious Appeal for the New World?

1. It must be more than the appeal of religious individualism. The individual is the unit of all religious advance. The experience of the church has taught us that. There can be no mass salvation. Religion is a personal experience, and it is vital and permeating in proportion to its individual quality. Religion spreads—men become changed men—by the personal touch of a vitalized person. This is an axiom of Christianity, but it must often be repeated to keep the balance of truth. And yet only to seek the individual is not the adequate aim and motive in this social age. We are not separate like so many grains of sand, but parts of an organic life. The individual is not only bound with others in the same bundle of life, but is affected by the activities and institutions and opinions of the society of which he is a part. We have had a contest of ideas and institutions as well as men. And the religious appeal, if it is to touch the sources of life and work with the best forces of the age, must not only touch the individual soul but work with all the forces of human life.

Dr. John Watson just before his death gave the annual address at an English Theological College, in which he said that the Manchester school in religion was passing. The individualist, the man who thought chiefly of saving his own soul, did not express the best Christian thought. Women who were tired of giving out tracts would do anything to help a needy sister. And young men who do not feel capable of teaching a Bible class or leading in prayer would gladly work in a boys' club. Men felt bound to their fellows. They did not care to be rescued unless the whole crew could be saved together. With such a tide running like a mill-race, with such a gale blowing in their faces, the next great religious movement would be one of social righteousness, and the aim the redemption of the national life.

Men have lost self in a cause. The individual has found his place and his motive in a world movement. Life is not local and provincial but lived in view of a world. That at least is the attitude of the best life. And no religious appeal less than this can hold and direct the awakened forces of the new world.

2. The religious appeal for the new world must be more than the appeal for *sectarian loyalty*. There are minds like Newman who do not think of religion apart from dogma and organization. The church is the divine life in the world; the church is the sacred depository of truth; the church alone speaks for God; it is the sole instrument to save men and society from the anarchic forces of sin.

Men who do not hold the exclusive theory of the church, like most free

churchmen, may still make the church the end of religion. They interpret all religious effort in terms of the church. Religious work must wear a churchly garb. When it slips out of the church into other fields, as education and industry and government, it cannot in the fullest sense be called religious. Men still maintain the false dualism of God and the world, of the religious and the secular. And so when the appeal of the new world comes they naturally think in terms of their own churches. In this or that Zion men have been born, in their church the religious life has been sustained and has found its opportunity of service. And so they plan new era movements, and try to utilize the awakened life for the strengthening and extension of the church.

And this is so far right. It may be the immediate duty before each one of us. It may be our best way of helping the world. In this day when the bonds of church attachment and obligation have been broken with so many other bonds, when more are anxious to criticize the church than lend a hand, we must emphasize the importance of the church. We cannot easily overstate what the church has been to us. It has given us our call and training, and we shall find in it the chief sphere of our work. I should feel guilty if by any word of mine I should lessen the loyalty of any man to the church of his birth or choice. Religion must have visible expression, agencies, and institutions as means of fellowship and action. The church is the noblest of these. It is the one institution devoted to the awakening and sustaining and expressing the sense of God among men.

But the church is only a means, an agent. And there are other means. It cannot confine, monopolize the spirit of God. Sometimes the church thinks itself the "be all" and "end all." That is always the temptation of church leaders. An organization is tempted to do everything to justify and continue its power. It is the tendency of bureaucracy; the sin of officialdom. Christianity is a spirit and a purpose. "That institution is Christian which expresses the Christian spirit, and whose program realizes the Christian purpose. No other is Christian indeed, however spangled with Christian labels it may be."

The spirit and purpose of Christianity is brotherhood—a democratic society in which men shall live together and help each other, and work together for the highest ends. That means the law of good-will, and good-will often demands sacrifice. A church must come under this law as well as the individual. Does its life promote the largest ends of religion? New era movements to be religiously effective must have a higher spirit than church loyalty. They must have the spirit of the largest democratic social good.

In the center of an eastern city, within two blocks of each other, is a group of strong churches, each trying in the spirit of Christ to minister to the many-sided needs of their people. Two are of the same denomination, and the third is a kindred church. The latter is proposing as its response to the New World to raise a large sum of money to enlarge the equipment of the church. It is the appeal of denominational loyalty. But the pastor,

a man who sees beyond his garden wall, feels that such effort is essentially sectarian, that the true answer to the call of the New World would mean a sacrifice upon the part of his particular church for the religious good of the community. They come from all parts of the city to maintain this particular organization. He feels the demand for union. If they would join the nearest churches, they would do the most for religion. It is typical of many cases in both city and country. Religious fellowship, Christian unity, wherever and as far as it would make for spiritual influences, is certainly an unmistakable lesson of the war. If we hear God's voice out of the clouds of war, he certainly tells us this. There are practical limits; the spirit must not evaporate into visionary schemes, but the Spirit must not be grieved or quenched.

The times that try men's souls, either a personal or national crisis, breaks up the crust of outer habit, breaks through the walls of creed and ordinance that man has made as religious defense and separation, and men find how much they are one in their essential nature and need. Many such experiences have come from the war. I know of nothing more beautiful and appealing than the story told by Kathleen Burke, the head of the Scottish Women's Hospitals in France and Serbia. It is found in her book, *The White Road to Verdun*.

Everywhere you hear accounts of brotherly love and religious tolerance. I remember kneeling once by the side of a dying French soldier, who was tenderly supported in the arms of a famous young Mohammedan surgeon, an Egyptian who

had taken his degree in Edinburgh and was now attached to the French Red Cross. The man's mind was wandering, and seeing a woman beside him, he commenced to talk to me as to his betrothed. "This war cannot last long, little one, and when it is over we will buy a pig and a cow, and we will go to the curé, wont we, beloved?" Then in a lucid moment he realized that he was dying, and he commenced to pray: "Ave Maria. Ave Maria." But the poor tired brain could remember no more. He turned to me to continue, but I could no longer trust myself to speak, and it was the Mohammedan who took up the prayer and continued it, whilst the soldier followed with his lips until his soul passed away into the valley of shadows.

The appeal that has stirred the heart of the nation and brought men to act together, men of the most diverse inheritance and training, has been the danger to the very principles that have made us a nation, a contest that involved not only our life but the life of all men, all the fair hopes of the world's progress. And no appeal less than this can conserve the religious values of the war. No motive less religious than this can take the passion for liberty awakened, the nationalistic spirit set loose, and make them self-restrained and thoughtful of other interests than their own, and co-operant toward the enduring good of the world.

II. The Elements of the Strongest Religious Appeal

It must be a view of religion as the essential life for all men, as fitted to the religious nature which is the essential fact of every man. It must not divide men but unite them. It must not check the aspirations of men, but

interpret them and guide them. It must sympathize with the impulse for self-expression, the passion for freedom, and harmonize it with the society of men. It must recognize the imperfect strivings after truth, the gropings after God, the broken lights of God, and so present Christianity that it shall be the realization of each man's hope.

It must be a view of religion that shall meet the need of the whole man; of all that makes a man's life. It must minister to the abundant life, not to a dwarfed, limited, eccentric type of life. It must not be the excision of any power, or faculty, or source of life, but be the enrichment of all life; it must be taken as the controlling and glorifying spirit into every province of life.

It must be a view of religion that shall have regard for the whole society of men; whatever makes this manifold, busy, unfolding life of masses of men in this close interdependent age. It must regard work as life, and furnish its aim and law. It must be the informing spirit of education. It must breathe in the ideal forms of life. It must find its expression in laws and institutions. It must direct the life of the nation, as the noblest expression of corporate life. It must bind nations together in a tighter bond than self-interests. Religion to make its appeal to the New World must be coterminous with life.

And it must come with a claim that is supreme, an authority of a law of life. It must come with the power of the deepest, fullest experience, the testimony of the best lives, the witness of the very heart of the race. It must come as a law that men have found true every-

where, without which no man can live the life of a man, without which there can be no hope of a perfected society of men. The appeal must touch the common man, and give to the strongest life a call for its fullest powers.

III. The New Hope of the World

The New World stands open, expectant, waiting. It never needed Christian faith so much. Never before did the world so challenge Christianity; never before did it offer such a field for its triumph. What is the religious appeal for the New World? It is found in the words of Jesus: "Let the dead bury their dead, but go, thou, and preach the Kingdom of God." The Kingdom of God the great message and great imperative of Jesus has come into general use only in our own time. It is the most common phrase of religion, often carelessly and thoughtlessly used. It may mean anything from a purely personal experience of religion to the heaven of the redeemed. And it is certain from its increasing use that the phrase is beginning to have a more definite content, to stand for a more definite conception of the Christian spirit. It should not surprise us that this spiritual-social ideal of Jesus is so long in making its great appeal to man. That is the way with all great truths; they are prophetic; and man must be prepared to receive the fullest light. The ages that thought religion confined to the church could not receive Christ's ideal; neither could the ages of intense individualism that held the only values to be God and the soul.

But now when there is a growing sense of social solidarity, it is easier for

us to express religion in social forms. A society of men seems its natural and necessary conception. Great thinkers have helped us to this conception. And great Biblical scholars have seen a new light. But here, as in every development of Christian truth, the revealers have been the men who have had a first-hand experience of Christ under the pressure of new problems. The men who toil and suffer, who identify themselves with men just as Jesus did, are able to feel as he did, and catch something of his vision of a better, fairer world. The program of Christianity is a broad one; it covers the race; it embraces every interest and relationship and institution that makes a true man and a true society of men. The struggle of the nations has given this world-conception of Christianity new clearness and significance.

The contest has been between the conception of the state that found in itself its highest end and motive and something higher, and that something higher is a Kingdom of God. The bond of peoples, pressed together by a common cause, has brought its pressure on great communities of faith, on historic creeds and churches, saying that the religious life is more than any organization, and that the value of any institution is its contribution to the spiritual forces of the age.

And through the clouds of war is the vision of an ordered and peaceful world. The Calvary of war must be followed by a risen life, and we feel that this life is possible only by the agreements of free peoples, free in the life of Christian truth. The hope for the race is Christian democracy.

The spiritual interpretation of the war is expressed in the Kingdom of God. Many are being taught of God, and outside the church those "the preacher could not school" are sensitive to the new meanings of life. It is easy for some men to make light of Mr. Wells' discovery of God. But suffering has brought him a real experience. Would to God that all men had as real an experience, and as sure a faith in the purposefulness of the world.

And this experience of God throws new light on the meaning of life. Listen to this noble idealism:

The vision of God's kingdom on earth will follow the realization of God's true nature and purpose, and he will begin to develop the latent citizen of this world-state in himself. He will fall in with the idea of the world-wide sanctities of this new order being drawn over the warring outlines of the present, and of men falling out of relationship with the old order and into relationship with the new. Many men and women are already working today at tasks that belong essentially to God's Kingdom, tasks that would be of the same essential nature if the world were now a theocracy; for example, they are doing or sustaining scientific research or education or creative art; they are making roads to bring men together; they are doctors working for the world's health; they are building homes, they are constructing machinery to save and increase the powers of men.

Such men and women need only to change their orientation as men will change about at a work-table when the light that was coming in a little while ago from the southern windows begins to come in chiefly from the west, to become open and confessed servants of God. This work that they were doing for ambition or the

love of men or the love of knowledge, or what seemed the inherent impulse of the work itself, or for money or honor or king or country, they will realize they are doing for God and by the power of God. Self-transformation into a citizen of God's kingdom, and a new realization of all earthly politics as no more than the struggle to define and achieve the Kingdom of God in the earth, follow on, without any need for a fresh spiritual impulse, from the moment when God and the believer meet and clasp one another.

We have had few better interpretations of the incorporation of the mind and spirit of Christ in the life of the world; the life of God in the soul of man directing all effort and relationship, expressing itself in all achievements and institutions, the Christian life of men a Kingdom of God.

IV. God's Kingdom as a Goal

"Let the dead bury their own dead, but go, thou, and publish abroad the Kingdom of God." What appeal does this make upon the awakened earnestness and purpose of men?

The Kingdom of God expresses the unity of truth. God's world is one of order and harmony, and whatever is of truth has a place there. Truth is God's child, and no truth can be exiled from religion, the life of God among men. If evolution is the best way of expressing the growth of life, then evolution must throw light upon God's working in a human soul. If social democracy be the best form of social and political relation, expressing the largest welfare, then social democracy must find its motive and power in the gospel of Christ. No truth of human good can be outside the Kingdom of God. Every student, every

worker, every light upon the meaning of life, every form by which the spirit of man expresses its power and its aspiration, are all a part of God's task, and help to make his will complete.

The Kingdom of God expresses the unity of human life. Science teaches us the unity of life. We come from untold generations and we are shaped into being by forces all about us we but dimly understand. History tells us of the growth of ideas and institutions, our indebtedness to the past and our being conditioned by the present. And religion is not the exception of life, but the interfusion of all these facts and forces with the presence and will of God. As high above the city there is a point of harmony where the babel of voices is blended, so this varied and complex life finds its unity in the Kingdom of God. Every fact and force is seen to have its place and harmony, giving to all life its purposefulness, filling it with divine meaning.

The Kingdom of God expresses the relation between the personal and social in redemption. There can be no mass salvation. Men are reached one by one. Each life is a distinct personality, and yet each life is a part of an age, and a part of a still closer environment, a member of a family, a shop, a school. We are living souls; and yet it makes all the difference in the world how these bodies of ours are kept. The 200,000 school children of New York City who last winter were found underfed and so unfit for their school work, cannot be saved by the most zealous imparting of religious ideas. Their bodies must be fed and trained if they are to escape deformed and perverted lives. We are responsible

persons, and yet where we live, and how we live, and what we do will vitally affect our characters. Millions are condemned by the slum before they have the chance of life. "Until the housing conditions of our great cities are Christianized," said General Booth (and surely no man knew better than he), "there is no hope of reaching the people with the gospel." Millions are hardened by the keen and sometimes cruel competition of modern industry. They care no more for sin and redemption and immortal life than for last year's weather reports. The soul has been crushed out by the struggle for bread. We are so bound together body and soul that a child's wrong habits of eating, due to the ignorance or indifference of its parents, may have to do with a man's power of choice. We are so bound together in society that an unkept street may have to do with an unkept soul. The work of an individual salvation must not be relaxed one whit, but the work of social salvation must be pressed with all the wisdom and devotion that Christian faith can inspire.

The Kingdom of God makes the church the servant of democracy. The religious experience is always personal and when the attempt is made to institutionalize it, to insist that it shall go through certain steps and take certain expressions, its freedom and power are limited. Religious experience cannot be confined to a church save at great loss to religion and society. State churches have tried to do this, and they have sometimes been notorious blocks to religious and social progress. Even free churches may be eccentric and divisive, not adequately representing the religious experience of the community. And

vital forces of religion may be outside the churches. But when the church is a servant and not the master, it awakens and sustains the religious experience, and it inspires and directs it in every channel of human welfare. It awakens the sense of human worth and works for that equality of opportunity which is the essence of democracy. The church rejoices in and inspires all these allies of the human spirit; she makes them the allies of God.

The Kingdom of God gives a worthy goal for the development of human history. Any great struggle is bound to be accompanied with sentimental and even magical waves of religion. It was so in the breaking up of the Holy Roman Empire, with the wars of Napoleon, and with this world-struggle. Men despair of ordered progress, of the victory of sacrificial love, and expect the present system to end in catastrophe. As hopeless on the other side is the attitude of some of the world's great ones. In every nation are groups of strong men who laugh at leagues of peace, who do not believe in the open agreement of democratic peoples, who hold with old diplomacy to the balance of power and the necessity of great armies and navies.

"If Christ should propose a league of nations," said a Senator last week, "I would not accept it." Over against a superstitious faith and a Christless civilization is the conception of the Kingdom of God, faith that God has a purpose of good for the race, that the living Christ is the soul and hope of human progress, that love not might is the law of life.

This may not be the end of wars. We do not know through what trials

God may lead the race. But we do know that he is leading us and the end is peace.

Christ did not fail

Though ever unaccomplished is His word;
Him Prince of Peace, though unenthroned,
we hail,
Supreme when in all bosoms He be heard.

V. Living for Lives

The Kingdom of God is an imperative call. "Go thou and publish abroad the Kingdom of God." If a man has caught a vision of the world-call, nothing personal can ever stand in the way of duty. Few scenes are more touching in modern biography than the moment when Madame Breshkovsky gave her little son to the care of her sister that she might devote her whole life to Russian freedom. It was the choice between the dearest personal treasure and the call of millions of oppressed peasants. She felt it God's call and she did not fail, though her heart was torn with anguish. If a man has seen the heavenly vision he can not be disobedient to it without being false to his own soul. "We must needs obey the highest when we see it."

Dr. Dale of Birmingham, after he had been preaching many years, had a vision of the living Christ that was like a sunrise to him. For a whole year he could think and speak of nothing else. Christ is the living one. He inspires the thoughts of men. He is in the movements of human life. A like experience

has come to many men in the vision of the Kingdom of God. It has been a faint dawn in their youth; it has been growing through years of study and experience; it comes into full glory when they see men bring the grace of Christ and the power of prayer into charity and education, into industry and government, as well as the distinctive field of the church.

There is no appeal today like the Kingdom of God. What reality it gives to our work in making for the present good of human life. What breadth it gives to our work, as touching every interest of man, giving a spiritual motive to every service. What fellowship it gives to our work, finding helpers and co-workers in every worthy sphere; "making a rampart of my fellows." What significance it gives to our work, connecting the simplest act with the far-reaching plan of God.

We are to work in the church of Christ for individual lives. And no poet's dream, no prophet's ecstasy, is to divert us from the responsibility and preciousness of this personal work. But it makes all the difference in the world how we do this work; whether we are mere priests of a church or prophets of the Kingdom of God. I know that I have been talking about an ideal. But as long as we do not surrender the ideal of our life, all is right.

Hell-gates are powerless
Phantoms when we build.